

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to recognize an outstanding Oregonian and public servant on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his service to the Pine Grove Fire Department. Friends and colleagues of Edward Riddell Lage, Jr. will soon observe the passage of the half-century milestone in which he has helped protect the lives and property of his fellow citizens. Like each of them, I stand in awe of Eddie's remarkable dedication to others. I take great pride in adding my voice to the chorus of Oregonians who have expressed gratitude for his many contributions to his community.

Mr. Speaker, Eddie Lage is a fourth-generation farmer who was born July 28, 1936, into a well-respected Oregon farm family. As a young man, he joined the all-volunteer Pine Grove Fire Department on May 12, 1953, beginning what would come to be a lifetime spent in community service. Eddie's fellow volunteers describe him as a tireless and faithful firefighter with a near perfect record of attendance at drills and other meetings. This commitment would ultimately be rewarded with Eddie's appointment as fire chief as well as to a position on the department's board of directors. He remains a fixture among the community's volunteer firefighters, inspiring them with his selfless dedication to others. Perhaps most remarkably, he has no plans to give himself a well-deserved rest.

Eddie exemplifies the spirit of volunteerism and good citizenship, and the Oregonians he helps keep safe owe him a tremendous debt of gratitude. In addition to his service on the Pine Grove Fire Department, he has also served as a member of the National Ski Patrol for 25 years, as well as the Crag Rats, an outfit in the Columbia Gorge that rescues climbers from nearby Mt. Hood. If there is an organization dedicated to helping Oregonians in their hour of need, chances are that Eddie is a member of that organization. As with his service as a volunteer firefighter, the work he has done as a rescuer has been totally without pay. The satisfaction of helping others is the only compensation that he desires.

Mr. Speaker, Eddie Lage has served as a board member and past president of the Washington/Oregon Canning Pear Association, where he advocated on behalf of his fellow Northwest orchardists. Eddie has also served the young people of his area, donating his time and energy to helping ensure bright futures for those who come after him.

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He has been active with the Boy Scouts of America and served as a member of the Columbia Pacific Council. He has held the role of an advisory member of the Future Farmers of America; and perhaps most admirably, Eddie served for 8 years as a member of the Oregon National Guard, proudly wearing the uniform of these United States.

Eddie Lage personifies the well-trained and highly motivated public servant who is dedicated to the protection of his community. He has sacrificed his time, risked his life, endured discomfort, and shouldered tremendous burdens for no other reason than his commitment to others.

Mr. Speaker, most of us spend our lives hoping that we will leave the world a better place than we found it. Eddie Lage need not entertain such a hope. In his case, it has long since been fulfilled. I am grateful for Eddie's devotion to his fellow citizens. I am honored to represent such a fine man in the United States Congress and to call him a friend.

THE FORGOTTEN EXODUS: JEWISH REFUGEES FROM ARAB LANDS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HENSARLING). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, as Israel and Palestine take steps towards peace and as President Bush and the State Department released the road map for peace in the Middle East, I would like to draw attention to an important issue in the peace process. The issue of refugees is widely regarded as one of the most contentious aspects of the Arab-Israeli dispute.

However, up until now the debate has focused primarily on the plight of Palestinian refugees and the question of the right of return. Mr. Speaker, it is critical that future peace negotiations and discussions, specifically on the rights of refugees, address both sides of the issue, both Arab and Jewish. Many people do not realize that during the years following the establishment of the State of Israel, more Jews than Arabs became refugees. It is estimated that over 900,000 Jews were stripped of their property and expelled from Arab nations. Approximately 600,000 refugees were absorbed and assimilated by Israel, and the remaining 300,000 fled to other nations, including the United States and Canada.

At a time, Mr. Speaker, when Jews face severe persecution, economic deprivation, discrimination, and expulsion from Arab lands, Jews turn to Israel as a place to begin their lives anew. Israel opened her arms and welcomed the refugees, granting Arab Jews citizenship and welcoming them into Israeli society. Jews in Arab nations were forced to forfeit the lives they had worked so hard to achieve, to abandon their homes and livelihoods. They had to turn their backs on centuries of Jewish history, culture, and community. They had to leave behind schools, synagogues, hospitals, and businesses, all without compensation and all confiscated by the various Arab governments.

However, the fact that Israel chose to absorb and assimilate the refugees from Arab nations does not lessen the

fact that they were all expelled or otherwise compelled to leave their homelands.

I have personally spoken with several of my colleagues in Congress about this often-forgotten aspect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They agree on the importance of holding a congressional hearing on this subject and the need to educate Members of Congress and to ensure that they and the public are informed of the issues at stake and the sacrifices made by Jews from Arab lands when they were forced to leave their homes and countries.

Mr. Speaker, Congress cannot continue to be silent on the plight of Jewish refugees. It is critical that Congress address this issue while the refugees are still alive. By doing so, we can ensure that justice for Jewish refugees assumes its rightful place in the debate. And this must be done while we can still address their rights as victims.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FILNER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SUPPORTING THE TROOPS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, along with nearly all Americans, I felt a great sense of pride at the competence and skill displayed by our military in Afghanistan and Iraq. It was extremely gratifying to see nearly all Americans united behind our troops. Even though all did not agree with the idea behind the war, at least they supported the troops.

Over the last several months, a number of communities in my district provided meals for military personnel being transported across Nebraska. That is not a big deal, but this spirit of support was really a rebirth of a project called the North Platte Canteen. The North Platte Canteen's history is as follows: just 10 days after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, North Platte, Nebraska, residents learned that on December 17, 1941, Company D, Nebraska National Guard troops, were scheduled to travel through North Platte aboard a military train. According to sources, that train could possibly make a stop in North Platte on its way to the west coast. So nobody

knew because of secrecy whether they were coming or not.

Because of the secrecy, it was unknown when the train would actually stop in North Platte, but hundreds of family members from the area came out with food, Christmas gifts, and baskets of fruit to celebrate the troop train's arrival. When the train finally arrived, the Nebraska troops were not aboard. Instead, it was Company D, the Kansas National Guard troops who were heading west.

The crowd was disappointed but rallied around the Kansas troops, gave them the gifts and food that they had prepared for the Nebraska National Guard and sent them on their way. The very next day, Rae Wilson of North Platte contacted the local newspaper to suggest that the community open a local canteen to meet the troop trains traveling in either direction across the United States. With this humble suggestion, the North Platte Canteen was born.

The North Platte Canteen met every troop train that stopped in North Platte from Christmas Day, 1941, to April 1, 1946, 5 years. While the volunteers never knew when the trains would be coming through because of national security, they were always there to serve the military personnel going off to war.

The canteen served approximately 6 million members of the Armed Forces at the North Platte Canteen in the Union Pacific Railroad station in North Platte. So that really constituted probably three-fourths to 80 percent of the total military personnel in the United States Army at that time.

There were approximately 55,000 volunteers from nearly 125 communities who helped to feed the troops that traveled through North Platte. It is estimated that 23 trains a day traveled through the community carrying between 2,000 and 5,000 troops each day. It is also estimated that the troops each month consumed 40,000 cookies, 30,000 hard-boiled eggs, 6,500 doughnuts, 4,000 loaves of bread, 3,000 pounds of meat, 450 pounds of butter, 1,350 pounds of coffee, 1,200 quarts of ice cream and on and on and on. And this was done at a time when gasoline and food items were rationed. The majority of the items were donated to the effort, as the North Platte Canteen did not receive any Federal or any government assistance of any kind.

Individual volunteers also helped to get cards, letters, and phone calls to family and friends of the service personnel when they stopped in North Platte. The volunteers wrote the notes and made the phone calls to loved ones to let them know that the soldier that they were interested in was doing well.

This week I introduced a resolution honoring the outstanding efforts of the individuals and communities involved with the North Platte Canteen in North Platte, Nebraska, during World War II. This is, I think, an example of

the spirit of cooperation that we currently see across our country for our troops; and it just shows what can be done when partisanship is set aside, when everyone is united in one purpose. And these people, members of our greatest generation, are now disappearing very quickly. So I think it is important that we recognize their contribution at this time because many of them in 2 years, 5 years, 10 years from now will not be around. So their extraordinary act of generosity and service to the country, I believe, needs to be recognized; and I urge support of this resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PENCE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HATE CRIMES LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, we are all part of a larger community. If the rights of one are endangered, then everyone's rights are endangered. That is why we must be concerned that across the country incidents of hate crimes continue to rise. The San Francisco Bay area, my own backyard, reported more than 357 hate crimes last year. This is up from 317 in the year 2001. Last fall a transgender teenager, a 17-year-old, from Silicon Valley was murdered by four acquaintances. Earlier this month, the body of a 30-year-old bisexual man was found buried in a shallow grave in Monterey County.

We must stop this. We must work for tougher legislation to protect those targeted for hate crimes. And we can do this by passing a Federal hate crimes law to protect all Americans. No one in America should live in fear because of his or her ethnic background, religious affiliation, gender, disability, or sexual preference. That is why it is important to pass meaningful hate crimes legislation and pass it now. We need to strengthen our existing laws to protect people against all hate crimes. We must send a message to all Americans that hateful behavior is wrong and will not be tolerated in our Nation. Our law enforcement officials need vigorous tools to fight and prosecute hate crimes because existing Federal law is inadequate.

That is why I have been, and will continue to be, a strong supporter of

the gentleman from Michigan's (Mr. CONYERS) Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act. With this bill, for the first time under Federal law, sexual orientation, gender, and disability would be added to the list of categories covered by Federal civil rights laws. In addition, Mr. Speaker, it would expand Federal civil rights laws to allow prosecution of hate crimes even if the event did not occur during a federally protected activity such as while voting or attending school. Also, the hate crimes bill would expand the circumstances under which the Federal Government could offer assistance to State and local governments to help prosecute these crimes.

Last Congress we had 208 bipartisan co-sponsors on this bill. This Congress we need to pass it into law. The Republican leadership has cast this bill aside. That is unacceptable. We have another chance in the 108th Congress, and I will continue to work with the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) until this bill is passed into law.

Congress must make it clear that there is no room for personal attacks and bigotry in the United States of America. We are all part of a greater community, and we will only be protected from hate crimes when all our neighbors are protected from hate crimes.

THE MATRICULA CONSULAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TANCREDO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, every year or so for the last several years there has been an attempt to bring something before the body and, in fact, it has come before the body and it is referred to as amnesty, sometimes an extension of 245(i), or that is the technical way of explaining it. But nonetheless, it is always a process, a desire on the part of people here and maybe even in the administration to grant amnesty to people who are living here illegally, that is, to reward people who have broken our laws by coming into the United States without our permission. It is a bad idea, and so far the Congress of the United States has failed to go along with it, thank goodness.

So what has happened in the last several months really is that a new tactic has been applied here, a new strategy has been developed. Unfortunately, I think even with the agreement of the administration, something else is happening in order to accomplish exactly the same thing. Instead of now passing a bill through the House of Representatives simply granting amnesty to everyone who is living here illegally and rewarding them for that behavior, there is another thing that is going on, and what is happening is this: foreign nations hand out to their nationals something called the *Matricula Consular*. That is what it is referred to by